

File Afghanistan: Three Years of Occupation

December 1982

Scott
Armstrong
First Floor

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Following is a paper written by Eliza van Hollen of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in December 1982. Others in this series include Special Report No. 91, "Afghanistan: Two Years of Occupation," No. 86, "Afghanistan: 18 Months of Occupation," and No. 79, "Afghanistan: A Year of Occupation."

Overview

Early in 1982, the Babrak Karmal regime and its Soviet sponsors redoubled their assault on the Afghan resistance movement hoping to achieve a turning point in the 3-year battle. In March, Babrak declared that the time had come to "take the revolutionary struggle to the provinces, districts and villages." At the end of the year, however, there is little to show for their pains. Military, political, and economic gains continue to elude those who would impose a dictatorial Communist regime on the people of Afghanistan.

The Soviets increased their troop strength to about 105,000 and greatly intensified their military operations in 1982 but generally failed to discourage the resistance forces (the *mujahidin*) or to drive them from their strongholds. Indeed, *mujahidin* activity has increased dramatically inside Kabul itself in recent months in spite of intense Soviet military activity on all sides of the capital. Soviet inability to rebuild the

Afghan Army into a loyal and effective force against the resistance continues to be a prime cause of military weakness.

Over the past year, the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had hoped to cure itself of internecine fighting between its Khalq and Parcham factions and become the pre-eminent guiding force in Afghanistan. Instead, in the wake of a party conference in March (the first since the PDPA came to power in April 1978), the political infighting became even more bitter. Many influential Khalqis are under suspicion of either sympathizing with or collaborating with the resistance. Rejection of the party by the populace remains almost universal.

At the end of 1981, the PDPA's seventh plenum called for a nationality and tribal policy to appeal to local tribal and ethnic aspirations and win support for the regime. Despite occasional gains, a year later it has become clear that tribes that once appeared susceptible to various regime blandishments are once more participating in the *jihad*—the holy war—against Babrak Karmal.

The government had pinned its hopes on a modified land and water reform program as the catalyst for increasing agricultural production in 1982

and winning support from the peasants. Enterprises disabled by the *mujahidin* were to be reactivated. And Prime Minister Keshmmand claimed 63 new projects were to go into operation with Soviet aid. But the continuing strength of the resistance movement, which dominates 75%-80% of the country, has foiled the economic planners.

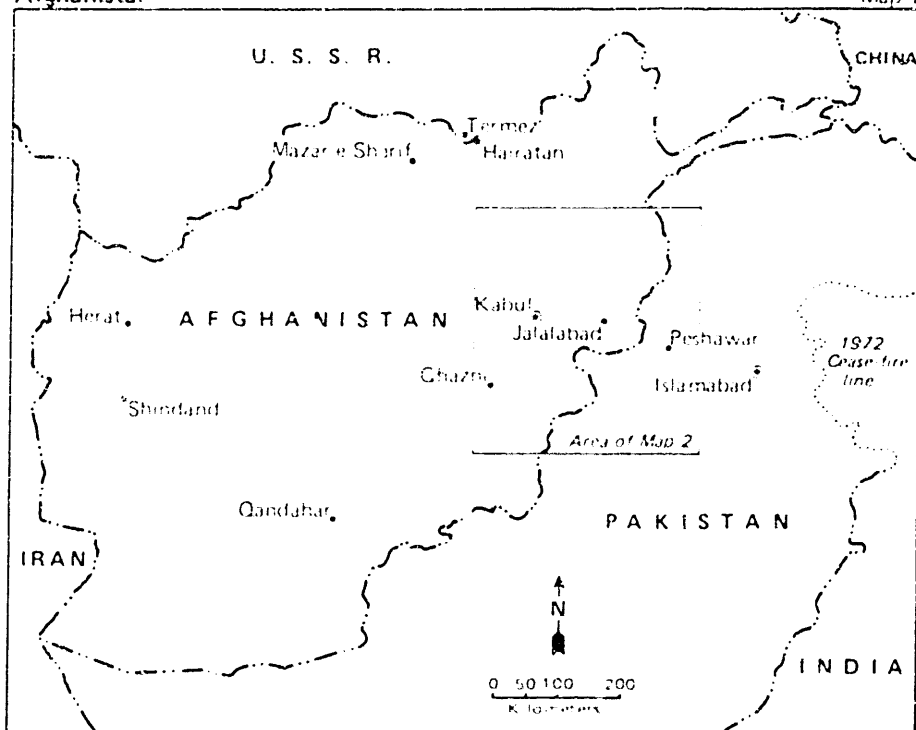
At the end of 1982, the resistance movement in many areas appears to be militarily stronger and better organized than at the beginning of the year. Coordination and cooperation between fighting groups inside the country have generally improved, while Afghan exiles have stepped up efforts to foster greater unity in the resistance as a whole. Nevertheless, the political weakness of the resistance movement remains. Disruptive fighting between some bands inside Afghanistan continues. Exile leaders based in Peshawar, Pakistan, are split into two competitive alliances. Furthermore, there is a large gulf between formerly prominent leaders now in exile and some of the Peshawar based organizations on the one hand, and some of the *mujahidin* fighting in Afghanistan, on the other.

The U.N. mission to promote a political solution to the Afghan crisis has made progress on procedural issues. The U.N.-sponsored indirect talks in Geneva in June began to deal with substance, but the critical phase of the negotiations lies ahead. U.N. representative Diego Cordovez will soon resume his efforts to widen what he perceives to be the area of agreement between the parties. The success or failure of the U.N. negotiations ultimately will depend on Soviet agreement to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. The United States supports the efforts of the U.N. mission to negotiate a political solution consistent with the principles expressed in the U.N. resolution on Afghanistan.

If the new Soviet leadership chooses to pursue the present course of military activity, which is designed to wear down the Afghan people, it will continue to confront almost universal opposition.

The November 1982 U.N. vote of 114-21

Afghanistan.



The Kabul/Panjsher Valley Area



Map prepared by Laura Wasko, Office of The Geographer

was another impressive demonstration of strong international feeling on this subject.

The plight of more than 2.7 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan continues to focus international attention on the Afghan tragedy. Moreover, increasing media coverage is making the world community more knowledgeable about Soviet conduct in Afghanistan. Recent new evidence about the Soviet use of chemical warfare in Afghanistan has received worldwide publicity. The second session of the Bertrand Russell People's Tribunal on Afghanistan met in Paris December 16-20 and heard testimony concerning the increasing number of atrocities committed by Soviet soldiers against Afghan villagers. Thus there has been no diminution of profound international concern over the individual and collective suffering now being endured by the Afghan people.

Soviet Military Offensive Intensified

At the end of 1981, the Soviets significantly stepped up their military operations and increased their troop strength. Both developments appeared to follow from the protracted visit to Afghanistan in late 1981 of a high-level Soviet military delegation led by First Deputy Defense Minister Marshal Sokolov.¹

The initial increment of 5,000 troops in December was followed by several thousand more in January. The total number of Soviet troops in Afghanistan is now estimated at 105,000. In addition, about 30,000 men on the Soviet side of the border serve in a rear-guard capacity; some of these are periodically involved directly in operations in the northern areas. The U.S.S.R. thus has a force of about 135,000 committed to the Afghan war.

Soviet military operations throughout 1982 have been more massive and more elaborate than in 1981; they appear designed not only to eradicate *mujahidin* strongholds but also to intimidate civilian supporters of the freedom

fighters. The previous political strategy of wooing the population to support the regime's National Fatherland Front had been unsuccessful; by the end of last year the *mujahidin* were clearly expanding the territory under their influence. In 1982, Soviet firepower has been used much more indiscriminately as the Soviet and Afghan Armed Forces have sought to reestablish the regime's authority in key areas.

The big winter offensives against Qandahar in the south and in Parvan Province north of Kabul revealed Moscow's revised military strategy. These drives which were followed by similarly harsh operations against many villages and towns throughout the country, inflicted heavy casualties on civilians and occasionally on the *mujahidin*. More often, however, the freedom fighters have managed to withdraw with their force relatively intact and to return to the area as soon as the Soviets have left.

Civilian populations near strategic targets have suffered the most. For example, the towns in the Shoinali area immediately north of Kabul have been bombed heavily throughout the year. *Mujahidin* in this area are a threat to Kabul itself and to the important Bagram airbase as well as to traffic moving along the main supply route from Kabul to the Soviet border. Many other strategically important areas in both eastern and western Afghanistan have been subjected to repeated aerial attack, but none has been hit with the same frequency and intensity as those near the capital.

Moscow probably will try to refrain from large-scale counterattacks on the *mujahidin* inside Kabul. Although they have on occasion bombarded resistance-controlled quarters of two other cities, Qandahar and Herat, the presence of a large community of foreign observers may inhibit them in Kabul. But the State Information Service (KHAD—the secret police) which is run by the Soviet KGB, appears to have in-

creased its activities in Kabul in recent months in response to *mujahidin* activity in the city. Recent emigrants have described a growing police-state atmosphere in the capital.

The Soviets also appear to be concentrating their military efforts in areas which are economically important and which are essentially under *mujahidin* control. These include fertile agricultural regions and the sites of industrial enterprises that have been disabled by the guerrillas in districts surrounding the major cities—Kabul, Qandahar, Herat, Jalalabad, and Mazar-e-Sharif.

Other Soviet military activity during the past year apparently has been intended to discourage movement across the Pakistani and Iranian borders; it does not appear to have succeeded. Soviet forces also have been engaged in equally unfruitful efforts to suppress the resistance in the northern provinces along the Soviet border.

Panjsher and Paghman Operations

The most important Soviet military objective in 1982 was to reestablish the regime's authority in the Panjsher Valley, 60 miles north of Kabul, and to destroy Ahmad Shah Mahsud's *mujahidin* organization in this area. Another important priority was to drive the *mujahidin* out of Paghman, a mountain retreat only 12 miles from the capital. Both the Panjsher Valley and Paghman have become strategically important *mujahidin* strongholds as well as symbols of *mujahidin* success.

During the summer, the Soviets launched two major attacks on the Panjsher. The campaigns have been referred to as Panjsher V and Panjsher VI, highlighting the growing number of Soviet efforts to take the valley.

Panjsher V, which began in mid-May and lasted about 6 weeks, stands out as the biggest Soviet military operation of the war to date. Although an unusually large combined force—about 12,000–15,000 men—established base camps about one-fourth of the way up the

¹See Special Report No. 91, "Afghanistan: Two Years of Occupation," United States Department of State, Washington, D.C., December 1981.

75-mile valley, the offensive failed to inflict noticeable damage on the 5,000-man *mujahidin* force under Mahsud's command. The operation, however, was very costly for the Soviet and Afghan troops in terms of casualties and lost materiel. Mahsud's men were particularly effective against heliborne troops, who had landed on numerous hilltops.

Claims by the regime in late June that the Panjsher had been "liberated" were premature. By late August, *mujahidin* pressure on the newly established garrisons forced the Soviets to mount another major offensive into the valley. This time they conducted extensive operations against villages in the Panjsher River's many lateral valleys. Once again the invaders suffered heavy casualties, lost large quantities of materiel, failed to establish a presence beyond the already garrisoned town of Rokha, and did not significantly hurt the *mujahidin*. Following the retreat of this second invading force in mid-September, the *mujahidin* resumed their harassment of the remaining garrisons. Defections from the Afghan forces climbed again, as they had earlier in the summer. As of late fall, Soviet planes continued to bomb the valley, and a new Soviet operation before the end of the year was likely.

The Soviets seem determined to eliminate the Panjsher as a symbol of the resistance; thus they may try to keep a garrison in the lower valley throughout the winter. This would be a difficult operation; the post at Rokha already is partially dependent on resupply by air. The *mujahidin* in the Panjsher downed several helicopters during the summer operations; garrisons isolated by winter snows are even more vulnerable. On the other hand, the *mujahidin* themselves are more vulnerable during the winter because they cannot retreat to their mountain hideouts.

During the Panjsher operations this year, the Soviets tried to cut off the valley by blocking entrance points, but these efforts failed. There were numerous reports, for instance, that

during the protracted offensive in May and June, Mahsud received assistance from other resistance commanders.

Soviet offensives in the Panjsher have inflicted great suffering on the civilian population as Moscow has sought to erode popular support for the *mujahidin*. Many homes, and indeed entire villages, have been destroyed by the constant bombardments. In October, for the first time, Panjsheri refugees began to arrive in northern Pakistan.

Severe food shortages in the Panjsher can be expected this winter. The fighting in early summer destroyed most of the wheat crop by depriving it of irrigation during a critical period. Some crops, however, have been harvested in the upper reaches of the valley, and some food can be purchased from neighboring districts. Mahsud has issued an appeal for international assistance to avert a major disaster.

The situation in Paghman, only 12 miles from Kabul, is similar. The Paghman district is a less tightly knit economic and social unit and has no charismatic leader, but the several *mujahidin* groups active in the area cooperate with each other. The ability of the *mujahidin* to control the town of Paghman most of the time has made it an important symbol of the resistance. Furthermore, *mujahidin* who congregate in the Paghman hills have operated effectively in Kabul itself.

After several efforts during the spring to open the road to Paghman, the Soviets mounted an extensive two-pronged operation against the area. The *mujahidin* were forced to retreat to the surrounding mountains. In late July, Babrak announced that this mountain recreation spot was once more open to the public.

But the regime's claims to have pacified Paghman were hollow. The *mujahidin* were soon overrunning army outposts, and heavy bombardments of the Paghman area, including the town's central bazaar in the summer, failed to halt resistance activity. Soviet and regime forces attacked Paghman again in October and November, but the army garrison there remains in jeopardy.

Soviet Casualties and Morale. Because of the shift to larger scale operations in 1982, Soviet casualties began to rise. To keep casualties low, the Soviets made heavy use of air bombardments

and forced Afghan military units to spearhead the ground attacks.

The new spate of casualties may be causing morale problems for the Soviets. In November, *Krasnaya Zvezda* carried an unusual, only slightly veiled, reference to Soviet casualties, indicating a need to acknowledge the sacrifices made by Soviet troops in Afghanistan. In an interview with a *Krasnaya Zvezda* correspondent, a member of Afghanistan's Politburo claimed that Soviet soldiers had now won the trust of the Afghan people, but he added that it had been won "at a great price." He went on to thank "the Soviet servicemen for their courage, selflessness and genuine internationalism." This admission went beyond the candid statement in *Krasnaya Zvezda* last February that life for the Soviet troops in Afghanistan "is hard . . . sometimes very, very hard." The November statement may have been spurred by the large death toll of Soviet soldiers from asphyxiation following an accident in the Salang tunnel on November 3.

Accounts of indiscipline, drug usage, and black marketeering—including the sale of weapons and ammunition—are numerous. Throughout the Soviet occupation, there have been periodic reports of defections to the *mujahidin* by Soviet minority troops, particularly the Tadzhiks who have important cultural and ethnic links with Afghan Tadzhiks. These defections seem to have increased during 1982.

Soviet commanders in Afghanistan are under heavy pressure from Moscow to produce results against an enemy that frequently outfights and outwits them and that enjoys the support of the vast majority of Afghans. Thus when the Soviets fail to track down the *mujahidin*, they turn on civilians in frustration and rage. The Swedish journalist

Borje Almquist has described in detail crimes perpetrated by Soviet soldiers against Afghan citizens in Lowgar Province, which he visited during the summer. The Bertrand Russel Tribunal has publicized similar evidence of Soviet brutality.

Chemical Warfare. The Soviets have continued to employ lethal chemical weapons against the *mujahidin* in 1982. These weapons have been used selectively—generally against guerrillas in relatively inaccessible locations. For example, chemical agents have been used against *mujahidin* positions in caves and *mujahidin* hiding in underground waterways. Analysis of two Soviet gas masks recently acquired from Afghanistan confirms earlier suspicions that the Soviets are using the deadly trichothecene mycotoxins ("yellow rain") in Afghanistan. In November, the Department of State issued an updated report on chemical and biological weapons employed by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Laos, and Kampuchea (Special Report No. 104). This document details the new evidence compiled on this subject during 1982.

Soviet POWs. In the spring of 1982, after lengthy negotiations, Moscow agreed to let the International Red Cross (ICRC) take charge of Soviet prisoners of war captured by the *mujahidin*. The first three prisoners to change hands under this arrangement arrived in Switzerland in June. Four more have followed, the latest transfer having taken place in November. As part of the agreement, an ICRC team was allowed to go to Kabul in late August to visit prisoners and "carry out humanitarian assistance" on their behalf. The team, however, was unexpectedly obliged to leave Kabul in October, and the scope of the ICRC's role inside Afghanistan is still being negotiated.

Moscow was slow to conclude this arrangement, presumably because it involved recognizing the *mujahidin* as a negotiating entity and also because it was a formal admission that Soviet

soldiers were actually fighting in Afghanistan. The present agreement was reached after the *mujahidin* revealed that they had executed a prominent Soviet adviser, E. M. Okrimyuk. The freedom fighters held Okrimyuk prisoner for several months, hoping to exchange him for *mujahidin* prisoners held by the Kabul regime.

The Afghan Army

A major obstacle to Soviet military success against the *mujahidin* is Moscow's continuing inability to rebuild the Afghan Army. Not only is there a persistent shortage of recruits, but the loyalty of the officer corps remains in serious doubt.

Within the officer corps, Parchami loyalists are in a minority. They are outnumbered by disillusioned and alienated nonparty careerists and by Khalqis who bear a grudge against the dominant Parchamis. The elections preceding the national party conference in March confirmed the numerical edge which the Khalqis hold over the Parchamis among the officers.

Moscow hopes that increasing numbers of officers who have been trained recently in the Soviet Union will help create a more loyal force. The Soviets also may expect that the sons of party members now being rushed through officer training courses in Kabul will be more reliable. But the long list of Afghan officers who have defected includes many who received training in the Soviet Union.

Moscow also counted on General Abdul Qader, who was acting Minister of Defense during most of 1982 and officially appointed as Minister in September, to narrow the division in the military establishment between Khalqis and Parchamis. Qader has ties with both factions and has been described as more of a "nationalist" than a party man. Yet his appointment in place of General Rafi, who was an ardent Parchami, has not generated much support from nonparty and Khalqi officers.

On the contrary, there are many signs that officers in the Afghan Army

continue to collaborate with the *mujahidin*. Large number of Khalq officers were arrested in Jalalabad in March and in Ghazni Province in April, suggesting extensive plotting against the regime. Following the Panjsher campaign in early summer, reports circulated that several high-ranking officers had been arrested for collaborating with Mahsud. And in late September, General Wodud, commander of the Central Corps, was found shot to death in his office. He may have been killed either by the Parchamis or by enraged Soviets on suspicion of collusion with the *mujahidin*. Throughout the year, Afghan commanders have had their assignments shifted frequently—as if their Soviet overseers were trying to forestall the development of sympathetic ties between commanders and local *mujahidin*.

In a speech to the Armed Forces guidance and administration leadership cadre on August 12, Babrak Karmal was highly critical of the army's performance. He shied out irresponsibility with weapons perhaps prompted by the large loss of material to the *mujahidin* in the Panjsher, the ineffectiveness of some combat units, the failure of officers to lead and inspire their men, and the lack of cooperation between the army and other security organizations. Babrak ascribed these problems to inadequate political indoctrination in the army and, by implication, to party factionalism. He stated that "unity . . . and the solidarity of party ranks in the army was of vital and national importance."

The shortage of Afghan troops may be even more significant for Kabul than the shortage of reliable officers. The regime has been unable to build an army of more than 30,000–40,000 men; it loses about 10,000 men annually through desertions and 5,000 through casualties. The year 1982 began with an urgent need to replace some 20,000 men who were released from service in December 1981 after completion of their extended

tours. Extensive sweep operations were held throughout the country to obtain replacements. Those caught in the dragnet included many persons with valid claims to exemption. Similar sweeps were conducted in the spring and early summer but with little success.

In late July, the regime again revised the draft law. The tour of duty for regular recruits was extended by 6 months to 3 years. Reservists who had been inducted following the September 1981 mobilization had their present tours extended from 1 to 2 years, and another large class of reservists became eligible for active duty when the age ceiling was raised from 35 to 39.

The reaction in the armed forces was predictable: a perceptible increase in desertions. Indeed, the draft law changes appeared to have the immediate effect of causing a net loss of army personnel despite the sweep operations. To counter this hemorrhaging, the regime announced higher pay for soldiers and noncommissioned officers during their third year of duty.

In October, in a further indication of the troop shortage, the regime decided to violate traditional custom by drafting men from the Shinwari, Mohmand, and Jaji tribes who inhabit areas adjacent to Pakistan. The decision also may have reflected the regime's awareness that these tribes were not preventing cross-border traffic in their area—the quid pro quo for the draft exemption. But when the tribesmen staged a large demonstration in Kabul in early November in protest to the draft, the government reversed its decision.

Rumors of a government plan to create a civil defense corps of boys (ages 16–18) and older men (ages 40–45) to perform guard duty have greatly alarmed the populace. Younger boys (ages 10–15) are to receive military training at school to prepare them for such responsibilities. As much of the police force is tied down with guard duty, the civil defense plan would free police for combat. Many of the 16–18

year-olds already have been conscripted even though they are under the legal draft age of 19. The plan allegedly is to go into effect in March 1983.

Consolidation of All Security Organizations

Morale and disciplinary problems have afflicted other security organs—the Defense of the Revolution (DOR) militia, the police, and the secret police. The DOR militia is supposed to be a force of selected party loyalists, but its members are often young, opportunistic, and easily demoralized; they have a poor record of performance under stress. There is also much bickering among the different services, including fighting between the police and the KHAD in Kabul.

The Soviets and the regime recognize the advantage of imposing more centralized control on the security apparatus. The "Action Program," adopted at the party conference in March, called for establishing a "unified single defense system of . . . armed forces, frontier forces, security organs, groups of defenders of revolution and volunteer groups of tribes." It also called for "tight party control over the . . . activities of this system as a whole."

The plan to consolidate all security forces under centralized party direction has run into political and bureaucratic resistance. In speeches to KHAD personnel in May, to army cadres in August, and to the police in October, Babrak Karmal criticized all the services for their lack of cooperation. His complaints, however, are unlikely to have much effect. For example the top Khalqi leader, Gulabzoi, who as Minister of the Interior controls the police, probably sees the consolidation as a Parcham move to undermine his position; indeed, there are signs that Gulabzoi is continuing to try to build the police into a parallel "army" under his control.

Problems in the Party

The first national conference of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took place in mid-March 1982. In addition, three Central Committee plenums were held—the eighth in March to prepare for the national conference, the ninth in July, and the tenth in December. The first three meetings re-

vealed that the fundamental conflicts between the Khalqi and Parcham factions of the party are as serious as ever.

The conference sponsors probably hoped that the conference would establish the dominance of the Parcham wing and thus would further legitimize Babrak's leadership. The two main items on the agenda—changes in the party constitution and an action program to give the party a sense of direction—both seem to have been designed to reduce Khalqi influence.

The Khalqi leadership, however, turned the two-stage process of electing delegates to the conference into a contest punctuated by fistfights and shoot-outs, instead of accepting elections rigged in favor of Parcham candidates. The results confirmed that in spite of repeated purges of lower and middle-level Khalqis, the latter still outnumber their rivals—at least among full-fledged members eligible to participate in the election process.

The effect of the preconference elections was to exacerbate Khalqi-Parcham feuding. Babrak's speech to the conference referred repeatedly to the "factionalism" problem, highlighting his concern about what he referred to as "this old disease." Babrak stated that "when unity is weakened, the party faces weakness and defeat, even its existence faces danger." He denounced anarchism, lack of discipline, alien ideology, hostility toward new party members, and the related sins of nepotism, localism, tribalism, and ethnicity in forming party cadres.

During much of 1981 and particularly in early 1982, in the weeks immediately preceding the conference, the Parcham leadership engaged in an intensive drive to recruit new members. The purpose was twofold: to legitimize the party's claim to governing Afghanistan by giving it a larger membership and to neutralize the influence of the Khalqis.

By the time of the conference, a combination of coercion and enticements had netted the party enough new recruits to enable it for the first time to announce a membership figure: 62,000. At the ninth plenum in July, Babrak claimed that the number had increased to 70,000. Many observers estimate the Membership at about 35,000–40,000.

About half of the members are in the Armed Forces. In August, Babrak said that there were 20,000 members in the army and that "the army party organization forms the greatest part of the PDPA." This figure would include members in the officer corps, which is predominantly Khalqi, and new members among conscripts—a captive group that has provided the Parchamis with a large portion of their new recruits. Many of these persons defect from the party at the same time they defect from the army. (Even if the party's figure of about 62,000 members is correct, they would constitute only 4% of Afghanistan's population, estimated at about 15 million before the Soviet invasion.)

In what appears to be a thinly veiled effort to isolate the Khalqis in the expanded party, the Parcham leadership announced at the conference a change of rules to authorize a more rapid influx into the party of workers and peasants by shortening the probationary period. Rules also have been changed to relax sponsorship requirements.

Relaxing the rules is likely to cause problems for the party leadership. Babrak and others have indicated that new members have not carried out their party duties satisfactorily. At the conference in March, one leader noted that nearly half the party was composed of young people (18 is the age of eligibility), and he complained of their lack of "political maturity."

The other main item on the conference agenda was to adopt a comprehensive "Action Plan" to galvanize members to promote party objectives. Babrak Karmal's speech implied that the right to be carried on the membership rolls would depend on a member's active participation in the defense of the revolution—in combat and in the high priority area of revitalizing the economy.

The Parchamis may have viewed the more strict criteria for membership as a way to purge the Khalqis. But Soviet advisers, who probably drafted the document, evidently saw it as a means of coercing the Khalqis to cooperate. Moscow has always been concerned about antagonizing the Khalqis because of their strength in the military; for that reason, a major purge is unlikely.

The ninth central committee plenum of the party was convened in July without advance notice. At the time of the meeting, rumors of coup plots and of connivance between the Khalqis and the resistance were rife. Though the plenum ostensibly dealt with the need for party workers to get out among the people to sell the revolution, the gathering apparently focused on security problems and the continuing struggle between the Khalqis and the Parchamis. The crisis probably was ignited by the unsatisfactory outcome of the fifth Panjsher campaign and perhaps of other military offensives. High-level personnel changes were anticipated, including the removal of Khalq leader Gulabzoi from his position as Minister of Interior, but the most significant dismissal was that of General Gul Aqa, the Parcham political commissar in the Ministry of Defense who was held responsible for dispatching hundreds of volunteer party workers to their deaths in the Panjsher. Apparently a large proportion of the "volunteers" were Khalqis anxious to remain in the good graces of the Soviets by taking an active part in the war effort.

Divisions within Babrak's own Parcham faction remain. Relations between Babrak and Prime Minister Saitan Ali Keshtmand are cool. Keshtmand is ambitious and would like to step into Babrak's shoes as Moscow's favorite. As a former Minister of Planning who retains special responsibilities for the economy, Keshtmand is pushing hard for improvements in economic conditions to impress his Soviet mentors.

The ninth party plenum's directive to party members to work among the "masses" is the latest in a series of efforts to broaden the party's base. During 1981, the regime pursued this goal through the creation in June of an umbrella organization—the National Fatherland Front (NFF). Subsequent publicity has created the impression of a steadily growing organization that is opening up new provincial and district councils throughout the country. The anniversary of the front's founding was marked by a second plenum in Kabul in June 1982. The regime invokes the NFF when it wants to imply national support for such issues as a recent NFF-sponsored peace campaign. But the front is generally considered a facade; it has failed to achieve its purpose of mobilizing popular support for the regime.

Problems in the Economy

Both Kabul and Moscow publicly claim that Afghanistan has made considerable economic and social progress in spite of "interference" by the forces of "imperialism." In their own speeches, however, Afghan officials have expressed great concern over the continuing economic deterioration. For example, Babrak emphasized to the PDPA conference in March and again to the party plenum in July that "the economic front bears no less importance than the battlefront." Babrak continually stresses that the breakdown of the Afghan economy is a political problem that party members should solve. The regime is hoping to use improved economic conditions to generate popular support for the government, but the economy cannot be revived while so much of the countryside is under *mujahidin* control.

Afghanistan's economy rests primarily on agriculture. Over four-fifths of the population lives in rural areas. Reasonably good weather over the last few years has left the farmers in some areas not much worse off than they were before the Soviet invasion. Agricultural production, however, has fallen sharply. About 3 million Afghans (one-fifth of the population) have fled the country, most coming from rural areas and taking about 3 million animals with them. In areas of heavy fighting, including many of Afghanistan's most fertile valleys, crops have been destroyed or lost through lack of irrigation and cultivation. In the areas controlled by the *mujahidin*, what is produced is not shipped to urban markets, although this year military forces have appropriated harvested crops for the regime. As a result of the decline in agricultural production and problems of distribution, the Soviet Union has had to supply food and other commodities to meet the basic needs of the cities, notably Kabul.

Kabul's food problem this year has been greatly exacerbated by a large influx of refugees fleeing from nearby towns and villages that have been heavily bombarded by the Soviets. The population of Kabul has more than doubled since before the war to about 1.8 million. Although the authorities have tried to introduce price controls, recent emigrants report that basic commodities are in very short supply and that prices have skyrocketed.

In his campaign to win the support of the peasants, Babrak has outlined a program of land reform. The main innovation in this plan—as compared to the program applied by the Taraki regime in 1979 that stimulated the early growth of the resistance movement—is to accompany redistribution of land with the water rights needed to irrigate it. In conjunction with this program, Afghan and Soviet planners are seeking to test, re-damaged irrigation systems in 11 provinces.

The *mujahidin* have resisted these efforts. Preliminary phases of a pilot project in Deh Saba district (a province of Kandahar) have provoked strong opposition. It seems little inclined, therefore, that the project will be carried out. It is the opposition of Babrak and his prime minister that account for a prediction of a still greater intensification of the Afghan civil war in 1983.

The situation is no better in Afghanistan's small and central sector. Highway building is being retarded by the war, the growth of the rebel and guerrilla, the transportation network is in disarray, and the *mujahidin* have shut down many factories and virtually all development projects. At the party conference in March, Babrak listed government enterprises that have been disabled by the resistance, including "the cement factory in Herat, the textile mills in Herat and Qandahar, sugar factories and irrigation establishments." He stressed the importance of putting these plants back in operation, but there is no indication as of late fall that this has happened.

At the same conference, Prime Minister Keshtmand outlined an ambitious program of economic growth. He predicted a general increase in production of 6.3% with industrial growth of 10.3%, during the period from March 1982 to March 1983. These projections were predicated on 63 new projects to be carried out mostly with Soviet aid. The plan was based on the assumption that the more aggressive military strategy for 1982 would neutralize the *mujahidin* and reestablish the regime's authority in the provinces.

It was clear by late August that the military strategy was not working and that economic objectives were not being achieved. Keshtmand admitted to the Council of Ministers that performance during the first quarter of the year (March 21-June 21) was unsatisfactory. He indicated particular concern about shortcomings in the development of fuel resources, electricity, and minerals and raw materials. In particular, he mentioned the importance of increasing coal production as well as expanding oil and gas works, of getting started on the Aybak copper mine project in Badkhan Province, and of assuring adequate electricity for Kabul. Babrak's next year report to the Council of Ministers (in October 3) indicated similar concerns over two particular areas of the economy.

The strains on improving key sectors of the economy has been accompanied by high-level personnel shifts. Last spring, Prime Minister Keshtmand relinquished the planning portfolio to Dr. Khalid Ahmad Ataw, a professional planner. Keshtmand, however, retained fiscal responsibilities in the economic sphere. The Ministry of Power and Irrigation was split in May into two entities, presumably a reflection of the important issues attached to these areas. The former Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Land Reform, Abdul Ghafer Lakan, was elevated to the post of Minister.

Afghanistan's natural gas industry is the only sector of the economy that functions more or less normally. Almost all of the gas produced from fields located near the Soviet border and developed by the U.S.S.R. in the early 1960s is exported to the U.S.S.R. The nominal price increases negotiated since the occupation are all that keeps Afghanistan's economic statistics from being worse than they are. Part of the earnings from sales of natural gas is applied to repayments on the outstanding debt to the Soviet Union; the remainder is registered as credits in the barter accounting system for trade between the two countries. In this way, Afghanistan derives no hard currency benefit from its major export.

The Afghan economy continues to be tied tightly to that of the Soviet Union. An agreement signed in April 1981 called for doubling trade between the two countries during 1981-1985, as compared to the previous 5 years. Afghanistan's development plans are worked out by Soviet advisers; the emphasis on the development of fuel and mineral resources appears to have been dictated by Soviet requirements.

In mid-November, Babrak, speaking to a World Peace Council conference in Kabul on socioeconomic development, reviewed development achievements in Afghanistan. Most of the projects he cited are far behind schedule or at a standstill. The two that have been completed are conspicuous for their importance to Moscow: a new bridge linking the two countries over the Amu Darya River that was rushed to completion in May, a year ahead of schedule; and a satellite communication and television receiving system inaugurated in late February. This system gives Moscow an important communications link and the opportunity to project its political propaganda into Afghanistan.

Nationality and Tribal Policy

Both Kabul and Moscow attach particular importance to the regime's nationality and tribal policy. This policy, implemented by Minister of Nationalities and Tribal Affairs Sulaiman Laeq, tries to exploit ethnic and tribal self-interest to win support from Afghanistan's diverse peoples. The seventh party plenum in December 1981 issued a special message to the tribes, and during the past year the regime has continued to try to exploit tribal sensibilities.

An important element in the regime's strategy is the effort to win over the tribes through cash, weapons, and privileges. These tactics appeared to be having some success at various times in 1982. Certain tribes seemed to lose their enthusiasm for the resistance and are said to have agreed to arrangements by which they would be exempted from the draft in return for guarding the border.

In most cases, however, tribal acceptance of regime blandishments has proved to be temporary and tactical. Tribes in Paktia Province near the Pakistani border rebelled twice during the year to turn back Soviet and Afghan forces that were trying to close off access to Pakistan. Likewise, tribes in Konar Province, adjoining Pakistan, resumed armed resistance after allegedly having been neutralized by the regime. More recently, the regime provoked demonstrations when it tried to draft men who belonged to the border tribes in Paktia and Nangarhar Provinces.

The Resistance Movement

Resistance forces in Afghanistan demonstrated in 1982 that they could absorb hard blows by the Soviets and intensify their own operations. Most resistance organizations have survived this year's tough battles despite losses. For example, a respected commander was killed in the Paghman area in the spring. More recently, a young leader from the southern outskirts of Kabul was killed while leading an attack on a military garrison inside Kabul. In Lowgar Province, Soviet forces inflicted a heavy blow during the summer on resistance forces already weakened by friction among the *mujahidin*. In spite of some setbacks, observers have concluded that the resistance is stronger at the end of the year than it was at the beginning.

Early 1982 was a difficult period that revealed the vulnerability of the resistance during winter months when the *mujahidin* have less mobility. Access to mountain trails for escape routes and to mountain redoubts for sanctuary is cut off by heavy winter snows. The *mujahidin*, for instance, suffered serious setbacks in Qandahar in the south in

January and in Parvan Province, north of Kabul, where Soviet and regime forces trapped many freedom fighters and their supporters in an encircling operation in February. Nevertheless, the guerrillas continued harassing operations throughout the country during the winter. In January, a *mujahidin* gunner in Paktia Province downed a Soviet helicopter in which Lt. Gen. Shkidchenko was a passenger. Shkidchenko's death was reported in the Soviet press without reference to the circumstances.

Resistance activities picked up in the spring. *Mujahidin* renewed their harassment of the highways. They regularly attacked convoys on all major routes to procure weapons, ammunition, food, and other supplies. The freedom fighters also have kept up their attacks on other targets such as government and party offices and installations in urban and district centers, including police posts and military garrisons.

The *mujahidin* have shown improved capabilities this year against Soviet combat aircraft, including Mi-24 helicopter gunships, and airbases, and against targets inside Kabul. The Soviet military headquarters, the Soviet Embassy, and the Kabul airport have all been hit by heavy *mujahidin* fire. Recently the guerrillas have exploded bombs in party offices and hangouts of the secret police in the center of Kabul.

Resistance operations in the Panjsher Valley, Paghman, and Kabul have received the most publicity, but freedom fighters also continue to engage Soviet and Afghan forces throughout the country. In Qandahar and Herat, for example, the resistance continues to be effective in spite of repeated Soviet military campaigns. Indeed, *mujahidin* are once again operating inside Qandahar city from which the Soviets had forced them out last January.

The *mujahidin* are active in the northern provinces adjoining the U.S.S.R., despite the deployment of additional Soviet forces in this area. Indeed, *mujahidin* periodically cross into the Soviet Union on raiding parties and also receive assistance (and sometimes recruits) from their ethnic cousins across the river. When Babrak went to the

Soviet Union in mid-May for the opening of the new bridge linking Termez, on the Soviet side, with Hairatan, there was no large public ceremony on the Afghan side; security conditions precluded such festivities.

The effectiveness of the parallel government run by the resistance varies from region to region. In the Panjsher Valley, Ahmad Shah Mahsud has mobilized virtually the entire population of 100,000 for the resistance struggle. In some ethnically homogeneous areas—notably the Hazarajat and Nuristan—autonomous governments have been formed, although these governments have been weakened by internal dissension.

The resistance remains a collection of numerous separate movements. But cooperation between various elements has increased considerably in 1982. In the areas around major towns and cities, operations frequently are combined ventures involving several groups. Furthermore, such groups now cooperate in operational planning and in the procurement and sharing of weapons.

In Peshawar, the six major exile organizations have formed two alliances. In the field, cooperation cuts across alliance lines. In some places, local leaders have abandoned their Peshawar affiliations and have united under a local commander.

Nevertheless, in spite of improved unity, clashes occur periodically between rival bands. These battles occasionally have caused fairly heavy casualties and have led to disillusionment among the population of the localities where they occur. Friction among *mujahidin* groups, for example, has seriously weakened the resistance effort in Lowgar Province. The fighting stems from competition between groups to establish their authority over a given area, but there are increasing signs that the battles sometimes have been provoked by Soviet or regime agents.

In this situation, progress toward consolidating the resistance movement has been uneven. But the judgment of observers who have visited *mujahidin* groups in Afghanistan during the past year is that many are becoming better organized and are cooperating more effectively with one another.

Prominent Afghans in exile have stepped up their search for ways to overcome political divisions in the resistance movement and to bridge the gulf between themselves and the *mujahidin*. Former Prime Minister Youssuf has been active in this effort as has Abdul Rahman Pazhwak, a former Afghan diplomat who once served as President of the U.N. General Assembly. Pazhwak arrived in New Delhi from Kabul in late March and announced his intention to try to promote a government-in-exile. Before such a government can be established, however, serious conflicts within the resistance must be resolved and difficult questions of leadership—including whether former King Zahir will have a role—must be answered.

The Afghan Refugees

In the period since the April 1978 Marxist coup in Kabul triggered the flow of refugees from Afghanistan to Pakistan, more than 2.7 million people have registered with the Pakistani authorities. This figure emerges from the reenumeration of the refugee population conducted by the Pakistan Government in 1982.

Refugees continue to enter Pakistan at a steady pace. The numbers have declined, probably reflecting the fact that many villagers close to Pakistan became refugees in the early stages of the war, while resistance leaders farther away from the border have urged the local population to stay in their villages. Also, victims of the war in the interior have moved to Kabul and other cities. In October, however, authorities in Pakistan noted a rise in refugees arriving in Pakistan, including people coming for the first time from the Panjsher Valley.

The international refugee relief program, sponsored by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and

implemented by the Government of Pakistan, has been remarkably successful. Islamic communality and cross-border kinship in the tribal areas of Pakistan where most of the refugees are located have contributed to the welcome that Pakistan has extended to its Afghan guests.

In fiscal year 1982, the United States contributed over \$105 million in support of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. This figure includes about \$70 million worth of food aid given through the World Food Program (WFP), a U.N. agency, and about \$27 million donated through the UNHCR. The U.S. donation constitutes one-third of the total UNHCR budget and about 60% of the international food contribution. The balance of the U.S. contribution goes to several voluntary agencies.

In spite of the large international contribution, the Government of Pakistan bears the brunt of the relief effort. It pays a cash allowance to refugees and pays the costs of administering the relief program and providing transport for relief supplies. Furthermore, Pakistan has suffered environmental damage owing to the refugees' need for firewood and for grazing for their 3 million animals.

Despite some incidents, relations between the refugees and the local Pakistani population have been generally smooth. Nevertheless, the larger the refugee population becomes and the longer it remains, the greater the likelihood of friction. Although this prospect puts pressure on Pakistan to negotiate a political solution, President Zia has indicated that Pakistan would accommodate many more refugees if necessary.

The refugee population in Iran is estimated at between 500,000 and 1 million. Over 4,000 refugees of Turkic origin were resettled from Pakistan to Turkey in 1982, including a tribe of Kirghiz nomads from the Wakhan corridor. About 4,000 Afghan refugees were admitted to the United States during fiscal year 1982.

Long-Term Soviet Prospects

The most urgent Soviet priority in Afghanistan during 1982 has been the pursuit of its military objectives: eliminating the *mujahidin* forces and keeping the Afghan people from supporting the resistance. But Moscow also pursues a long-range policy of stimulating a more favorable political climate for itself and its proteges. A key element of this policy is the development of loyal cadres of young people through Sovietization of the Afghan educational system and extensive educational and training programs for Afghans in the Soviet Union.

Estimates of the number of Afghans currently studying in the U.S.S.R. vary from 6,000–10,000. This program, however, does not always achieve its purposes. Afghan students have encountered hostility from Soviet citizens angered by the loss of Soviet lives in Afghanistan. Some students have clashed with Soviet police.

Last summer, as in the two preceding years, a large number of Afghan children (1,200 in 1982) went to summer camp in the Soviet Union. Parents have complained about political indoctrination courses at these camps and also about Soviet and regime efforts to use children as informers.

Moscow is creating an infrastructure of Soviet-style institutions in Afghanistan on which it counts to mold the people in the Soviet image. The Soviets hope that key organizations, such as the National Fatherland Front, gradually will take root.

The regime's nationality and tribal policy also is part of Moscow's long-term strategy. And Babrak's major effort to coopt religious leaders undoubtedly reflects Soviet direction.

The Afghan people have seen through these strategies and have largely resisted Soviet efforts to win their support through gifts of food and consumer goods. Over the longer term, however, growing hardship and suffering in Afghanistan could make the population more susceptible to Soviet blandishments, pressure, and propaganda.

Moscow continues to pursue its long-term objective of wearing down international resistance to the Babrak regime. A central element in this effort is to build up Babrak's international image and to strengthen ties between his regime and other receptive governments, primarily countries of Eastern Europe. In late May 1982, Babrak visited East Berlin and signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the German Democratic Republic. In early October, he went to Hungary and signed a similar treaty. These visits followed trips to Bulgaria (December 1981), Czechoslovakia (June 1981), and Moscow (October 1980). The Soviets clearly hope that by keeping Babrak on the world stage, they can eventually persuade the international community to accept him as a legitimate head of government.

Regime officials, with Soviet assistance, have made great efforts to develop relations with the nonaligned world. Foreign Minister Dost has been actively seeking friends in the Middle East and South Asia but without signal success. In India, whose criticism of the Soviet invasion has been restrained, his approaches have produced mixed results. India agreed to revive a joint Indian-Afghan commission on economic, technical, and commercial relations, and in May signed a protocol envisaging a modest program of trade and technical assistance. Subsequently Mrs. Gandhi became more outspoken about the need for a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and made a statement to this effect at her press conference in Moscow in September.

The international community, however, through a fourth overwhelming vote in the United Nations (114-21), has demonstrated once again that it rejects the Babrak government's claim to legitimacy. The U.N. resolution calls for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and a peaceful solution based on the principles of sovereignty, nonalignment, and self-determination, as well as for the creation of conditions in Afghanistan that would enable the refugees to return with safety and honor. The resolution also requests the Secretary General to continue his efforts to promote a political solution in accor-

dance with the resolution and to explore the possibility of securing appropriate guarantees of noninterference in neighboring states. The size of the vote in favor of this resolution is impressive evidence of continuing international concern.

Indeed, the spotlight on Afghanistan grows brighter each year. The number of journalists and photographers who have traveled inside Afghanistan with the *mujahidin* has increased, as has coverage in the international press and on television. Such events as the Florence Colloquium on Afghanistan and international observances of Afghanistan Day, both in March 1982, and the Bertrand Russell Tribunal meeting in Paris in December 1982 all serve to emphasize the importance of the issue. Nevertheless, the international publicity is periodic, while the suffering of the Afghan people is constant. The discrepancy between the magnitude of the tragedy and the international attention it receives works very much to Moscow's advantage.

Prospects For a Political Solution

Indirect talks on Afghanistan in Geneva in June 1982 drew international attention to the U.N. effort to seek a negotiated solution. The U.N. mission was originally mandated in November 1980 by the General Assembly and was launched in 1981 under the aegis of Secretary General Waldheim and his "personal representative" for Afghanistan, Perez de Cuellar.

In early August 1981, during his second trip to South Asia to deal with this problem, Perez de Cuellar won two concessions from the Soviets and the Babrak regime: The United Nations would play an active role in negotiations concerning Afghanistan; and Kabul would engage in negotiations with Pakistan and Iran together, rather than insisting on dealing bilaterally with each one. The latter point is important to Pakistan because, by pursuing a political solution in tandem with Iran, Pakistan will be in conformity with the resolution of the Islamic Conference in May 1980.

Kabul's concessions, which were procedural only, were embodied in the Afghan proposals of August 1981; these, in other respects, were a repetition of

its original proposals of May 14, 1980. The May 14 proposals in essence stated that Babrak's regime must be recognized as a legitimate government and that the Soviet troops will leave Afghanistan when what Kabul calls "outside interference" (the resistance) stops. The May 14 proposals also call for international guarantees for such a settlement.

The U.N. mission was temporarily interrupted when Waldheim was replaced by Perez de Cuellar in late 1981. In February 1982, Perez de Cuellar, following a formula devised by Waldheim, appointed Diego Cordovez, U.N. Undersecretary for Special Political Affairs, as his "personal representative" for Afghanistan.

By mid-April 1982, Cordovez was shuttling between Kabul and Islamabad, visiting each twice, prior to a stop in Tehran. Shortly after his return to New York, the United Nations announced on April 21, that both the Pakistanis and the Babrak regime had agreed to hold indirect talks in Geneva in June. Iran would not participate directly, but agreed to be kept informed and thus to be associated with the talks. The announcement also stated that the involved parties had agreed to discuss the following issues: "the withdrawal of foreign troops, non-interference in the internal affairs of states, international guarantees of non-interference and the voluntary return of the refugees to their homes."

The Geneva talks lasted from June 15 to June 24. The Iranians made it clear that they were not participating because the "real representatives of Afghanistan," i.e., the *mujahidin*, were not represented. Spokesmen for the Afghan resistance movement protested the talks for the same reason. The Soviets did not participate, but sent high-level experts in Afghan affairs to Geneva.

Following the conclusion of the Geneva discussions, the United Nations, Pakistan, and Afghanistan all issued positive statements and indicated that there was a measure of flexibility in the negotiating positions of both sides. At a press conference on June 25, Diego Cordovez referred to "certain important political concessions."

He disclosed that he had kept a written record of the "understandings" that he believed had been reached and that he would be working from these "texts" in subsequent discussions with the involved parties. Cordovez emphasized that the talks had moved beyond procedural questions to specific discussions on the basic substantive matters and stated that "we concluded a kind of package of understanding."

Although he did not discuss specifics, he said in response to questions that a beginning had been made to work out arrangements to hold discussions with Afghan refugees concerning the terms for their return and that the question of self-determination had been "touched on." These could be important developments because they relate ultimately to the difficult problem of constituting a government acceptable to both Moscow and the *mujahidin*.

The central issue of the negotiations, however, is whether the U.S.S.R. is seriously interested at this stage in negotiating a withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan. The "flexibility" reportedly demonstrated by the Kabul/Moscow side at Geneva has yet to be put to the test. But it should become apparent rather soon whether Moscow's support of the U.N. process is genuine or tactical. Cordovez will resume his negotiating mission in January 1983 with another trip to South Asia, and he will attempt to pin down the specific details of the comprehensive settlement he envisages.

The United States seeks the total withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan through a negotiated settlement, which will also provide for other essential requirements spelled out in four U.N. resolutions on Afghanistan: the self-determination of the Afghan people, the independent and nonaligned status of Afghanistan, and the return of the refugees with safety and honor. The United States supports U.N. efforts to achieve these goals. ■

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs
Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • December 1982
Editors: Norman Howard and Juanita Adams
This material is in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission; citation of this source is appreciated.

Bureau of Public Affairs
United States Department of State
Washington, D C 20520

Official Business

Postage and Fees Paid
Department of State
STA-501



If address is incorrect
please indicate change
Do not cover or destroy
this address label

WASHINGTON POST
14TH ST NW